OUR FLYING MEN

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THE writer cannot be found till after this war who can give to the world the essence of Aviation, and place the men who serve her in their undying place in history.

The glory that future generations will accord them cannot be gauged till more of their qualities are known, and all the circumstances of their brave deeds can be brought to light. Other branches of the services have their chroniclers, who have written down their traditions, life and language, and the deeds of the men who have served those branches will live because they are made popular. Some of the chroniclers have written from personal experience, and what they have told rings true. We want such a man to write of the air, for its stories are as wonderful as any of Jules Verne's.

The use of the air as a science is so new that it is developing daily, even whilst it is used in war, and it is an oft-repeated truism to say that this war has done for aviation what peace never could have accomplished.

No civilised people would have tolerated the risk of life to attain such proportions for the furtherance of a science ; war came and demanded this sacrifice for other reasons, and by this demand aviation came into her own as the fourth arm of the war machine.

In writing about aviation, either it must be treated purely as a science, or else as a means of locomotion and an essential of modern warfare. At present, we can learn something of this latter view, by knowing and understanding the pilots, and hearing of some of their enterprises.

We know now of some of the laws which govern the air. They have been discovered only by experience, even only by many fatal accidents. Men have had their machines break in the air, and with their deaths the reason has been lost. Many victims have been claimed before the law which they unknowingly disobeyed was discovered to exist. In flying, more than in any other science of war, the man is alone, and on his skill and nerve depends the result.

One must have lived amongst our flying men to write about them, seen them daily with and without their machines. Full account must be taken of what flying means to them—the mad intoxication of it at first, and then the absorbing devotion to their calling.

Even the outside world cannot have a living picture of aviation till all the details of their deeds and manner of execution can be disclosed. Even the names of pilots (save in exceptional cases) are not published, for the very obvious reason of not letting the enemy know where they are flying, and what machines they are using, otherwise they would work at a still greater disadvantage than now, and with even more risk to their lives.

Truth is stranger than fiction. Some of the

stories that leak through from the front are frankly disbelieved as being "too tall."

Quite lately a publisher had a book about flying sent to him in MS. He accepted it as fiction, yet he sent it to a pilot of his acquaintance, asking his opinion if such a story was likely to be realised. The reply came that the story was already out of date, the incidents were of every-day occurrence, and were not thought worth recording.

After the war the real work done by the flying men will be officially written, and it will be substantiated by photographs taken at the time; full dates will be given, and it will be history—history that will be exciting to read.

At present, the adventures told of flying men require a very great effort on the part of the hearer or reader. Imagination must fill the gap left by utter want of knowledge and experience. Many of the words used in the telling are new and meaningless to their ears. Great skill is talked about, but even the kind of skill cannot be explained.

We read almost daily in the papers:—"Our aircraft was very active and proved of assistance to our artillery"; or again: "Ten of our machines bombarded a station of great importance; five failed to return." To understand these bald statements, one wants to know how they do it and what skill is required. For instance, "to be of value to our artillery" means that aeroplanes are sent out from any air station behind our lines, which have to cross the firing line, and seek

the exact spot where a German gun is hidden. The gun may be disguised as a haystack, a house, a tree, or even it may be buried, and a mound of earth built over it. When found, the position is sent by wireless to the artillery, who feel about for what they cannot see. The aeroplane then has to correct the aim, by pre-arranged signals, till the hidden gun is put out of action.

Imagination has to come in here. Think of the difficulty of correcting a hit several thousand feet below you. You cannot be still for a second: your aeroplane is moving all the time and vibrating as well. You are during most of the time a target for the guns below you, and also for any enemy on the look-out to prevent you doing this particular work. Gun spotting and artillery directing is an every-day job for hundreds of men along hundreds of miles. It has to be done during an attack and close up to the fighting. If the weather is misty the pilot is obliged to fly very low down in order to see, and this greatly increases the danger. He has also to record the progress of the fighting as it goes on—the advance or retreat of his section—in order that reinforcements of men or machine-guns can be sent where they are urgently required. He further has to direct either the men or the guns to the required places. The enemy must be observed, and the watcher gives signals for a barrage fire to prevent fresh troops arriving, or to stop men being moved from one section to another.

Not only are our aircraft exposed to guns and enemy aircraft, but they have to fly in very bad

weather, when the conditions of the air make flying a perpetual fight for mere existence. For hours they have to remain at their responsible task, fighting against the elements as well as against the enemy. It is only by turns, zig-zags, and manœuvres of all kinds that they have any chance to live at all.

Allied to artillery work is that of photography from the air. It plays such an important part at present that aeroplanes are specially adapted for the purpose. A sliding door in the floor of the fuselage (body part of the machine) permits the observer to study the ground immediately below him, and to take a photo of any bit of the landscape as it slides under him. Special lenses are used that have been made for this purpose.

These photos are for recording exactly and indisputably any preparations that are being made by the enemy above ground. The photos give every detail, and therefore, if taken frequently, give a sort of cinematograph of what is taking place in the enemy's country just beyond the lines. After enlarging these photos objects are located exactly, and they can be dealt with according to circumstances. Trenches being dug are apparent, by the newly-turned-up earth, to this eye which cannot lie or make an error.

At sea the eyes of the seaplane have still wider range, for they can see into the water and discover the U-boat lying under the surface. Here photography is not used, but wireless takes its place, and instant communication ensues

between the seaplane and the shore batteries, or between it and another ship.

These winged guardians are fighting machines, small, fast, and very easy to manage. They carry one or more machine-guns, which are in the hands of a man well trained in the manner of fighting with them in the air.

The following story is by the pilot of such a machine and is told in his own words :—

I received orders to protect Lieut. A. while he was taking certain photos on the other side of the German lines. These photos were required immediately and were of great importance. The lieutenant was piloting a Farman type of machine, specially fitted up for photography. I flew a small machine, fitted with two motors, which gave her a good speed. My mechanic, Barnum, was acting as my gunner. Barnum is not his real name, but it was given him because of his clever imitation of animals and men, and of the role he played of entertainer in general to the aerodrome when off duty and sometimes even when on duty.

" Right you are, sir," he answered, as I called him. He proceeded at once to stack all the belts of ammunition into the cockpit. Everything else was always kept at the final stage of readiness.

" Let's see if we can wing a Hun," he said.

" The Hun may get us," I answered.

" Anyhow, if we can't get a Hun let's go for a decoration."

He always had the last word in repartee.

We waited till the Farman was off and had

headed in the right direction before we followed. We passed over Verdun, and had a warm reception from some of the guns, but no damage was done us. The Farman was searching round for her spot of interest when Barnum hit me on the shoulder and pointed to an L.G.V. (a German make of aeroplane) which was flying towards us. He swung round his gun ready to give it a peppering as soon as it got within range.

I was spoiling for a fight, for I had bagged nothing lately, but I had to remember my orders and keep an eye on the Farman, and also on the L.G.V. I put myself between the two, rising rapidly at the same time, so as to be ready to pounce like a hawk on a sparrow as soon as I got the chance.

The Hun fired first, and Barnum replied, but nothing resulted, owing to the difficulty of taking aim with a swivel gun-mounting, the vibrations of the engine making the gun shiver like an aspen leaf. To our joy the L.G.V. shared this disadvantage, and was probably cursing the cause as forcibly as Barnum.

We crossed each other at close quarters, then we both banked and turned short. I managed by an extra pull on the controls to get above the L.G.V. We both fired again simultaneously, and I noticed that the turns had brought us over our lines; I longed to bring down my quarry inside them, as no victories count officially unless the machine falls where the results can be verified.

We flew parallel to each other, though I kept my position above. We both had the sun in our eyes, which was trying. Barnum addressed the

Hun in his most comic manner, imitating a coster on Saturday night, while he fed his gun.

The next round still had no effect, so I put the nose of my machine down and dived straight at him with both my engines full out. The pilot saw the danger in time, and nose-dived also to get out of the way. I was 100 yards from his tail and was gaining speed when we both entered a cloud, and suddenly there was nothing in front of me. I cut off my engines, turned, and rose at once to look for the Farman. As soon as I was out of the cloud I saw her. She had given the L.G.V. a round in passing, and as I got close she informed me by our language of signs that photography would now be proceeded with. I followed at her steady pace a short distance behind, and slightly above her.

I hoped the L.G.V. was by now smashed in our lines, but I hardly believed in such luck. The Farman got to work while I idly circled above her. I admired the scenery of the woods with their autumn patches, and I liked the look of the soft white clouds better than being in them. The cold damp had been most disagreeable. The fighting-line was discernible by a double row of German sausage observation balloons, and I wondered what they were saying about us, and if they had already prepared the "Archies" for our return. Hardly had this thought crossed my mind than I saw two black specks. Barnum saw them also and pointed at them, making a sign of joy. They were coming towards us, and were getting bigger every second. I inter-

cepted them by flying across their path, Barnum making fine practice as one after the other passed by. His gun spat out like a devil in a rage.

I had two positions to avoid: neither enemy must pass me to get at the Farman, nor must I allow them to get too near me.

Both had to be kept in view, and I had to perform every acrobatic feat of which I was capable to baffle their double aim.

It has often been said that "stunt" flying is of no good, but I was glad of the practice I had had, as every trick had to succeed the other without a breath between them.

During a turn on one wing I caught sight of the Farman, and noted she was heading for home. I just saw a puff of smoke beneath her, and knew she was safe from "Archies." Now I was free to have my fight to the finish.

Barnum shouted in my right ear: "Two more between us and the lines." I dived, and dropped like a meteor. Crack! one propeller was shattered and its engine stopped. Luckily I had two engines. I got a shot near my foot, so I wriggled my toes to find out if they were still there. They seemed all right. I let my one engine swing the machine on to one wing. Ribbons of canvas and splinters of wood, held to the machine by wires, floated above me as I fell. A singing came in my ears caused by the rush of air and I felt a little dizzy. I had a vague idea that I must stop something, but I saw nothing near me—no machines at all.

My altimeter registered 3,600 feet. I had dropped just 4,000 feet, and I tried to get control over the machine. I soon found that the hit near my foot had cut the rudder wire in two, so that it could not be used; also a wing spar had been cut in half, and that a tip of wing floated apart from the rest.

Still, the other controls were intact, and I managed to get her straight and to land her. Many willing hands ran towards us, and the first word was of congratulation on bringing down the L.G.V. It had fallen in our lines. I was supremely happy, and proud to count 59 holes in my machine, besides the propeller and wing-tip damage.

What Barnum said and did that evening cannot decently be recorded, but he broke the record as entertainer, judging by the laughter.

Naturally the Germans use their aircraft as we do, and when we have some preparations on hand which it is well to keep secret, they have to be guarded from spying eyes. The following story is of one of the many duels and adventures which happen to those who are guarding the workers from observation from above.

"I've just got an order to keep off air spies from 12,000 men making new trenches and laying barbed wire. Your spell is three hours if you start at once." So said the officer in command.

On a double-seated biplane, well provided with machine-guns, I went up with F———, my

great friend and comrade in flying. I was pilot, he was general observer and gunner.

We passed over the town of P———, and saw people walking about the streets, then crossed a valley and got into a thick cloud. We forged straight through and got into sunshine again, but the earth was entirely hidden; only a panorama of clouds lay below us like some snow-covered mountains. F———, who sat in front, made a gesture of admiration with his hand. Hardly had he done so when they melted away and the earth appeared hard and clear below us. It reminded one of the theatre, only here the change of scene was better done. We found the trenches that were in the making; we could trace exactly the wider places of the gun emplacements and all the curves and corners of them. For over two hours we flew above them, at times very low down because of the clouds, and we felt how beautiful and easy was our war service compared to those chaps digging below. It was January and, in spite of the sunshine, it was very cold. I kept an eye on the time, and it wanted only another twenty minutes before we returned to a warm fire and a hot drink. I saw F——— stand up, and with his glasses scour the horizon. He fixed them on something I could not see. I turned the machine to that point of the compass, and soon made out an aeroplane. One of ours, or one of theirs? The moment held some excitement. F——— with his powerful glasses could see the black cross on the wings, so he made a cross with his fingers to tell me. He sat down

to his gun. My work was to keep the machine in the best position for attack. We got to 300 feet apart, the German slightly above us. I signed to F———, who knew my methods well, that I would pass close under him. He nodded and prepared to fire as we slid beneath his fuselage.

The German fired first from a hole in the floor of his machine; luckily for us it was a second too soon, or all would have been over. As we came from under him, I put up the nose of my machine at a good angle, and got on his level after a sharp turn. I distinctly saw the two men in their seats. The pilot had his head bent over his lever; the mechanic was just leaving his gun that fired underneath and had his hand on the revolving turret that mounted his second gun. The pilot knew well the one point from which we could not fire, and he tried to get there. I saw his plan, so, turning on one wing, I put the machine into a spin and went round and round him. F———, calm and ready, gave him short sharp practice whenever he got the chance. It was always answered, and a constant ping-ping caught our canvas. The German machine gave a shiver, and either the engine stopped or the pilot cut it off. But he began to dive.

I wanted to force him over our lines, so I followed him close, cutting off his line of retreat. This evidently annoyed the gunner, who, in spite of the terrific pace at which we were falling, kept up the fire. At the third round, a cry reached me: "Go down." I obeyed at once, thinking that F———'s gun had jammed or that another

had joined the fight. I felt something warm on my face, and put up my hand. It was wet with blood. I looked at F——— and saw his head resting on his elbow; his eyes were shut and blood was coming from his mouth.

Like a madman I shot down through the clouds. They were like cotton wool, and I had only my compass and altimeter to guide me. I strained my eyes to see the earth, but it seemed ages before it appeared. The tension was extreme: should I be in time to save him or should I ever get him safely to our lines? At last! the clear view. Like a falling star I made for the hangars, and landed before the nearest. F——— was lifted out like a child, and the doctor was on the spot. He found one little wound, but it was mortal, and the effort of calling out had brought on internal hemorrhage. The doctor quietly said: "F——— is dead. He has died a hero, for his victim fell in our lines just as you landed here."

I went out to be alone. I received another shock, for I saw my own face in a glass, and it was covered with blood, that of F———, my greatest friend and daily companion.

The dropping of bombs is the popular idea of the use of aircraft in war. It is far from being the principal use in military opinion. The Zeppelin raids on London, Paris, and other towns have caused loud cries for reprisals from civilians. They suggest that the Allies should bomb German towns. They should, however,

consider that Zeppelin raids have ceased because the Germans came to the conclusion that they did not pay. The loss of airships was greater than the harm they did or the moral effect produced.

To drop a really destructive amount of bombs on a big town 200 miles away takes some doing by a fleet of aeroplanes. On the one hand, it has a terrifying effect on the population, and its cost is not so great in money as an airship raid; but its cost in good pilots is much too high for these results.

Really first-class pilots are none too plentiful; they take time to train even after they come out from a school. They are required for all kinds of more important work, and if killed or maimed cannot easily be replaced.

The choice of men for distant raids calls for those of wide experience, in the best training, or with exceptional powers of endurance. The distance to be flown without a landing is often 400 or 500 miles. This means that to the weight of the bombs, the oil and petrol, one or two guns and ammunition must be added. To fly with such a heavy machine means very careful flying. A good pilot avails himself of every air condition at various altitudes. The higher he flies, the less power he gets out of his engine; at the same time he may find more favourable conditions at 10,000 than at 5,000 feet. The success of the raid depends greatly on his knowledge and his skill in turning it to his advantage.

Some bombing raids do not come under this category. They have a military object and a great one, such as the following story explains.

Five of us set out at 4 o'clock one September morning. Our orders were to destroy the powder-works at D——— in Germany. The day previous we had attended a sort of conference on the subject, with copious illustrations and maps.

We were all heavily laden at the start, and we had great difficulty in rising. Two of us were crippled as we crossed the lines, and had to return as best they could.

Over M——— we saw an Aviatik coming towards us. We had our machine-guns ready, but went forward without being offensive. We crossed the Rhine, and just as we left it I heard a shot behind me. I turned and saw a German machine close on my tail. "Oh, my good man, wait there a second." I pulled round my gun and gave him a round. It shook him off, but he turned very short and got close to the side of our machine. J——— was pilot. Unluckily his gun jammed (a horrid habit they have, just when you want them most) and the German got in a shot which wounded him and forced him to land. Only two left out of five, and we hadn't even got there! We had still 80 miles to go to D———, where the powder factory wanted blowing up.

Near to F——— the Aviatik caught us up, and, heavily laden as we were with bombs, etc., we were unable to manœuvre and turn to free

ourselves of his attentions. He made for Lieut. D———'s machine, opened fire and brought him down. We heard afterwards that he died in a quarter of an hour. Only one left now, and we were that one. I shivered to think of the fate of the others, and wondered how soon ours would come. I knew my companion well who was piloting. He would not think: he would go straight on and carry out every detail of the expedition unless he was killed. I nerved myself to our lonely flight and kept repeating: "I must avenge them; I must not fail them." I turned savagely on the Aviatik as she came to get rid of us, and, to my intense joy, wounded the pilot, who fell with his machine.

I felt better then, and we went on to our goal. Soon after it came into view, with its tall chimneys and surrounding town, a river running alongside. We came down in the middle of it to 4,000 feet, and just between two chimneys we detached two large bombs.

The result put heart into me. J——— made a wide circle to see the effect; then six more were let loose, and flames and smoke told us we had done our job. Not as five could have done it, but as well as one alone could. Now to return 200 miles. Being lighter by hundreds of pounds, J——— was taking a higher altitude, when a most violent shock rocked the whole machine, so that I thought no two bits could hold together. There was nothing to do, so I sat still, and it recovered. A 105 had hit us. The shot had gone between my legs and out through the floor of

the fuselage. I could see through the hole. Our hour had not come yet.

After leaving the ——— and re-crossing the Rhine, we were chased by a number of enemies. J——— kept straight on, while I gave them rapid fire right and left as they tried to surround us. They surprised me by making off, and I soon saw the reason. Lots of black specks were getting nearer, and I knew they were our own fighting machines coming to escort us home.

How glad we were to get back! We had been flying for five hours and had done some fighting. We had 60 holes besides the big one from the 105, but none were vital. I felt less depressed, as we had avenged our comrades.

On another occasion a couple of small bombing machines did fine work for those in the trenches. It was in September, 1916, along the Douai—Lille line. The French were making a push, and the enemy were doing their best to hold their positions. Reserve troops were being hurried up from behind the German lines. The aeroplanes were told to do their best to delay the arrival of fresh troops. They worked in pairs; each pair conceived a plan of attack and carried it out jointly.

The least failure meant a forced landing in hostile country, with plenty of soldiers only too ready to take a swift revenge. The plan arranged by the pair in question was to find and attack a troop train, and they succeeded even better than they had planned it on paper the night before.

They patrolled the line of railway from which the troops were expected, and watched it from a safe height. When they saw a long train travelling slowly westward, they both came down till they could see that it carried troops. They prepared their machine-guns and came still lower, one on each side of the long train. Heads came out of the carriages, and the men, seeing the Allied marks of red, white and blue circles on their wings, and no bombs being dropped, shooting, or other offensive measures being taken, concluded they were German aviators, flying French machines they had captured in order to escape the French guns. The travellers were full of admiration at the cleverness of the ruse. They waved hands and caps, crying: "Kolossal!" "Hoch!" and cheering loudly.

The sport amused them as the machines came lower and lower, nearer and nearer to the train; one on each side, till the pilots made their sign to each other, and opened fire with their guns at terrific speed. Panic, sheer panic ensued. The soldiers never gave a thought to their rifles but got under the seats, and crouched by the doors, while some of them jumped out of the train. Others called out: "Kamerad!" Band upon band of ammunition went into the machine-guns as the fire went all along the train, right up to the engine. The engine-driver fell, the engine gave heavier and less frequent gasps. At last a jet of steam hissed out of it and it stopped.

The two aeroplanes passed in front of the engine, one turning to the right and the other to the left

as if performing a dance ; flew to the end of the train, turned, and again fired all the way up to the engine. In this manner they delayed some fresh troops getting to the front.

After that they flew towards the station where the troops were to have disembarked, and passed a level crossing, the gates of which were shut, waiting the passage of this very troop train.

A convoy of ammunition wagons was waiting on the road for the gates to open. The two pilots carried out the same tactics, killed the men and horses, and so startled others that in the narrow road many waggons were overturned in the ditch. They continued their journey towards the station, where some anxious military men were waiting for the arrival of the troop train.

Such a bombing expedition is worth while, and, had the men in the trenches known how they had been helped, they would have given them hearty thanks. The staff knew and recognised it well. Earlier in the war, an aviator destroyed the entrance to a tunnel to block a railway. It happened that a munition train was just coming out, and the tunnel fell on it. The aviator did not see the train or know it was caught, but clear proof was given of its non-arrival the same night. No local German batteries replied to the Allies' fire and, in consequence, a very important position fell into their hands. The reports stated that " assistance being given by aircraft, we took an important position locally."

When first the Germans made raids by night, there was much discussion about the advisability of aeroplanes flying in the dark. Many men gave it their special attention. Certainly many lives were lost, in guarding London and Paris from Zeppelin attacks, by the landing of aeroplanes by night; it was disastrous both in the loss of good machines and, worse still, the lives of their pilots. Many attempts were made by French and English to master the difficulties, till at last a French captain organized a night squadron, and trained his own pilots under new and improved conditions. What these are cannot be explained now, but the fame of his work is well known and glorious. Fearing the eyes of our aircraft by day, the Germans profit by the darkness of the night to make military preparations, and our aircraft found means to know what they could not clearly see.

Towards the end of 1915, this French captain flew every night to watch this night activity. One night he saw a train, or rather he guessed at a train, being behind a red glow given by an engine. He flew very low down to ensure a good aim, and dropped a bomb on the light. He returned without any injury, in spite of a bad head wind.

The following night he went, accompanied by two other aeroplanes of his squadron, to the same place. Evidently repairs of some kind were being carried on by the light of flares. They were shielded, but visible from above. His three machines dropped three bombs each on the flares.

One pilot had his fingers frozen with the cold, but received no hurt, nor were they fired at.

The captain, being a man who did things thoroughly, returned alone the third night, and found no lights and no sign of activity, so he reported that he had met with complete success. The truth of his report was verified by daylight.

Now, with scarcely more danger than in daylight, do our flying men go to meet Zeppelins and aeroplanes in the dark, and their astounding successes need not be enumerated. Apart from the skill and experience of the pilot and even outside air risks, there are many unforeseen accidents which have caused the deaths of some of our best men. For instance, circumstances quite outside actual flying lost to us the services of R——— in Egypt.

He and a companion had to embark on two aeroplanes far into the desert. R——— was alone on his machine, but his companion carried a passenger.

The expedition being of uncertain duration, a small base was arranged for food and petrol some way in the desert, to be transported thence by camels.

The two machines started on June 15th, and, after one and a half hour's flight, failed to locate their small base. They landed as night came on, camped where they were, and slept under the wings of their machines, confident that at dawn they could find their base.

At the earliest daylight, R——— went up

on his single-seater to look for it. His motor was not giving full power, so he landed again without having discovered any signs of men or camels. The second pilot advised a return to headquarters for exact directions, and to return more quickly he flew his larger machine without his mechanic, leaving him with R——— to repair his faulty motor.

On arrival at headquarters, he found that the native camel-drivers had expected to find the two aeroplanes waiting on the ground for them, and that they had returned at once when they failed to see them.

The pilot returned immediately to the spot where he had left R——— and the mechanic, to fetch them away. He found the place, and the marks of the wheels of the aeroplane, but no men and no message. He flew round in a circle but found nothing at all. He returned at once to headquarters and instigated a thorough search with aeroplanes, motor cars and camels. Each went carrying water and petrol. Nothing was discovered until four days later, when a scouting motor found the two bodies of R——— and the mechanic by the aeroplane. The story was pieced together by the following notes, made by the mechanic before the end.

"Soon after Lieut. J——— had left, R——— and I repaired the motor. We decided to fly it as near to headquarters as possible, as we had very little water to drink. We got 25 miles, when it gave out again. We did all we could to make it right, and it took us another 8 miles.

But it was using too much petrol, and in another half-mile it ran dry.

"That night we suffered badly from want of water. While my back was turned, R——— shot himself. I believe it was so that I should have all the water left. I spent the next day on one spoonful. I slept most of the time. I remembered the liquid in the compass and drank it. I fired the Lewis gun many times. Nothing has come—just nothing." These words ended the notes.

Another adventure not dependent solely on flying happened to Captain O——— in East Africa. He had a duel in the air with a German. He got the worst of it, and his machine was hit. With more luck than skill he fell on soft ground, and fell free of his machine. The German made no attempt to see the fate of his victim, and flew off. Captain O——— was 50 miles from his lines, and he started off to walk them. During this long tramp he had to swim six rivers, and was greatly impeded by his compass, which he carried the whole way, knowing it was the only means he had of ever arriving back. He was attacked by crocodiles and had to drop the compass to save himself. However, he managed to frighten off the crocodile and recovered his treasure and guide by diving till he found it.

He encountered a lion, and had to hide for a long time. Finally, he arrived, with his compass, but with hardly sufficient clothing to cover his nakedness. He reported at headquarters, and found the report of his last flight given as: "One of our aeroplanes failed to return."

Where official reports are concerned, the truth of them need not be doubted, however improbable they may seem, but anyone can use his discretion in accepting the reason or cause of what he saw, as in the following story.

The official record states that on May 10th B——— brought down his eighth victim under the following circumstances; but the story told by his victim (now a prisoner of war) is not given in the official records, and need not be believed.

Two aeroplanes belonging to the same squadron were sent up on patrol duty. They kept up very high in order to be ready for any enemy and out of the way of guns.

They saw a German machine below them manœuvring in the most masterly manner, and it excited their admiration. It was looping, banking, making side-slips, and recovering balance, as if giving a special exhibition. The pilot was evidently one of rare ability and cleverness, for he was getting nearer and nearer to the French lines while showing his tricks.

The two patrollers considered they ought to stop this, and, taking advantage of his confidence, they approached without his seeing them. The acrobat German had a new type of machine, fitted with the latest design of machine-gun mounting, and a powerful engine. These superior advantages made the fight almost equal. B——— and his companion G——— were most delighted, and by their usual tactics drove the German downwards, firing all the time. The German gunner was also a master, for he replied rapidly, and kept

B——— and G———at work to avoid being hit. A shot from either B——— or G——— made a hole in the German's radiator and the engine stopped. Another hit the gunner, who ceased fire. The machine began to spin and fell to earth. At about 600 feet B——— saw a body drop out of the machine, but he did not see where it fell. The machine itself fell in some trees. Coming to land close by the trees in which it hung, B——— saw a man walk away; he jumped out and ran to take him prisoner. G——— landed a second or two later, and they approached him together, as G———had landed a little nearer to him. The German at once began talking. He was so elated at his escape from death that he was only anxious to explain how it had happened.

He said: "When you hit the radiator I was at the point of giving up the fight and reaching our lines, which I could easily have done by planing down without the engine, being at the height we were. But the gunner was my superior officer, and you had wounded him slightly. He ordered me to land at once and attend to his hurt. I refused, as there was no reason to do so when we could both have got away safely. However, he again ordered me to land, on pain of punishment. I told him we had orders to save our machine from getting into your hands, and that, being a new type of machine, it ought to be kept secret. The motor was silent, so conversation was easy and hot words followed.

"The machine got into a spin and the lieutenant, being mad with anger, hit me. I protected myself

as well as I could, and tried to get the machine righted again, as I knew what would happen if I did not get her under control. Being disobeyed by an inferior made the lieutenant blind to danger and death, and he got his hands on my throat.

"If I was to die, I made up my mind to kill him first—I did not mean to be strangled. I took the man in my arms and, with one great effort, got him on the edge of the fuselage; as the machine went round the spin helped me, and out he went. I instinctively glanced at the altimeter, and found it gave 600 feet—none too soon, if I wanted to save my life.

"I could do nothing. I knew I was doomed, but I was revenged on a coward. I shut my eyes, and clenched my hands on the lever, and awaited the shock that would finish all. I opened them again. I was still sitting there, but all was quiet and motionless. The trees had saved me, and I got down.

"Gentlemen, I am glad to be alive, but I am sorry you have got this new machine, which has many new improvements. I could not burn or destroy it where it is. I have the satisfaction of life, although I am your prisoner. My name is H———."

The name is well known as a pilot of great fame in Germany, but his explanation of what B——— and G——— saw cannot be verified. Another explanation is possible.

Patrol duties have other risks. While on this

duty around Verdun, a French pilot and his mechanic had to make a forced landing, through motor trouble, in that narrow belt of ground between the lines known as "No Man's Land."

They were covered by the enemy's guns and their own, and both were hard at it, until their own side, who saw the landing, stopped firing. They were also seen by the enemy, who did his best to hit such a good target.

They remained by their machine and calmly repaired their engine, perfectly ready for death but still meaning to try for life. Both men got into their places as soon as they had their engine running. The pilot had noticed that the shells came in bursts of six at a time, with a short interval between each set. They were of the "saucepan" type, and made a black smoke which hung for a time near the ground. He decided to try his luck in the next interval, as the shells were getting nearer each time. He flew right into the smoke, and determined to keep in it as long as he could. He followed the course of the wind which blew it along. When the guns actually touched the spot he had disappeared in the smoke of their own shells. He just skimmed over the Allies' trenches, and landed safely.

The distinguishing mark on the wings of the German machines is a black Maltese cross, and on ours a circle of red, white and blue. At present, they are the only means of recognition, even to the pilots. At the beginning of the war, the outline of the German machines was easily known, certainly to all flyers, by the setting back

of the wings, but now the types are only different in details which cannot be noticed at a great distance. To illustrate the similarity between the two, many stories are told. The following is a true one.

Two small fighting machines, both single-seaters, were returning from a special duty. The two men who flew them were great friends, and were constantly at work together. They had brought fighting in pairs to a fine art, and were known as "The Twins."

The day was in the spring of 1915, and rain clouds, black and white, were travelling across the sky at various heights, making holes through which the sun appeared for a minute or two at a time.

One of the Twins saw a German machine and attacked in his usual way. His friend saw the fight going on through a hole in the clouds, and instantly started to help. Before he could get there he was enveloped in thick "cotton wool," as he called the cold, damp clouds. He kept in the same direction by compass, but could not either see or hear anything of the fight. He altered his altitude, and flew in a large circle. No hole could be found, and the cotton wool seemed to envelop him altogether. He decided to look nearer the earth, so came down rapidly. Suddenly, while doing so, shots were all round him: one sang by his head, and others hit his wings, making a ping-ping on the covering. He could not locate them at once, but on looking right round towards

his tail, he saw his friend's machine for one instant. He imagined the situation at once. He thought that A——— had hit his enemy, and, while pursuing him to earth, had peppered his Twin. As he did not want any more, he turned over on one side like a porpoise to show the marks on his wings. The shots stopped at once, and he went on his downward course. The landscape was strange when at last it came to view. His compass glass had been hit and the needle broken, so he had lost his direction. This did not worry him, as he felt sure he was over the English lines, so he came still lower to ask his way. He saw an artillery transport going along a very bad road; he could just see the men sitting in their wagons. He cut off his motor and planed down, and was just landing when, to his surprise, the men leapt up, and he saw they were Germans.

Naturally, he cut short his landing, and switching on his engine, turned up the nose of his machine and was off like a dart. The men on the wagon had not even thought of firing, as they considered a live pilot and a machine had fallen into their hands. Hearing no engine, they had naturally thought it would not go, and that he had been forced to land then and there.

He felt a fool and was very angry about his compass. He came to a village and saw some Germans walking about, sitting and drinking, but they made no effort to attack. Just outside the village he saw two soldiers trudging along, armed to the teeth, and evidently on war business. He swooped right down, nearly touched their

long bayonets and went up again. They were so startled that they threw themselves into the ditch. This made him laugh so much that he forgot his bad temper and turned his thoughts to finding his way back as quickly as possible. He followed in the direction the soldiers had been taking and came to a gun. From the way it was pointing he knew where the English lines would be. The surroundings became more military and very aggressive towards him. He had to take to the clouds quickly and, keeping just on their fringe, he reached his own aerodrome. He was late for dinner and hurried to the mess. As he opened the door, thinking to see cheerful, well-satisfied diners, he only saw a depressed group standing round his Twin, who was stating, in a voice suppressed by emotion, "I tell you I brought down James" (his own name) "I saw him fall, and I can't find him anywhere." For a second no one moved as James entered. The rest of the story is too sacred to be written. One Twin thought he had killed the other. Imagine the meeting of such dear companions after death had so nearly come between them.

Everyone was excited when the Fokker machine first appeared, and it was reported to be a marvel in aircraft. The papers entirely lost their nerve about them. Questions were asked in the House as to why the English had not bought the rights when they were offered before the war. Their reputed superior qualities and wonderful engine were said to have lost the Allies the mastery of

the air. It was even said that the Germans were afraid to fly them over our lines in case the secret of their construction should be found out if they were brought down.

The capture of the first Fokker whole and intact is distinctly amusing.

A king amongst French aviators was invited to give his opinion on a new machine just arrived at the front. He was asked to try its paces and pronounce on its utility for fighting or other work. He looked it over and said nothing either for or against it. He went up with caution to test her climbing powers, her speed, and how she answered to her controls. Having just been erected for testing purposes only, all the various instruments were not yet fixed on the board in front of the pilot, and though two gun-mountings were there of an improved kind, no guns were fixed as yet.

This king of pilots made no attempt at loops, and was most careful to test every turn, giving the machine plenty of time to right herself. He did not indulge in any of his "stunts" which thrilled even the good pilots to watch.

Then he began to enjoy himself, and from what the onlookers saw, the "bus" appeared much to his liking. Suddenly he made a dart towards a distant spot, which glasses proved to be a Fokker. He climbed as he went, and dived straight at it. The Fokker had to dive to avoid a collision. He did it again; he did it four times. Each time he forced the Fokker nearer to the

aerodrome. He left it not a second in which to recover. It was evident that the pilot of the Fokker could not compare with the king, but he did his best to escape, and he opened fire. The king seemed to be everywhere at once, and never where he was expected to be. Finally he flew round and round the Fokker, just pushing him where he wanted him to go, like a dog driving sheep. The Fokker engine gave a few misfires; the gun had stopped firing some time before. Now the petrol gave out, and it was obliged to land on the aerodrome. The king landed beside him, and told the thrilled audience that he liked the new machine. He shook hands with the Fokker pilot and said he was glad he had carried no weapon, as he might have used it in the heat of the moment, and he would have regretted killing such a sportsman. When the German heard the name of this king of pilots he bowed very low, and said he was not so ashamed of his poor performance now he knew who was his victor. The Allies got a perfect Fokker without one shot.

They studied the Fokker, and in England the nerves of the Press were restored when they heard the opinion of the king after he had tried it—which he did the same afternoon. He said :

"Its type is that of the Morane-Saulnier, the controls are easy and require no effort, though the machine is somewhat slow in answering to them.

"The pilot is very comfortable in his cockpit, and has a good all-round view. The outlook

from immediately behind is better than in the Morane, but there is no possibility of the pilot seeing what is directly beneath him. The Fokker turns less quickly than many of the small fighting machines, and its speed is less than the Baby Nieuport. The gun is mounted to fire through the propeller, a slight modification being made in the invention of Garros.

"One very practical improvement is an invention by which the control lever is adapted to cut out the machine-gun. The pilot can use the gun without having to trouble about flying his machine meanwhile.

"The landing gear is strong and the machine easy to land. It is also an excellent planer. The motor is an Oberursel of 100 h.p. and an exact copy of the Gnome. Like the Gnome, it cannot be run slowly, and the only way to regulate the speed is by the use of the switch."

The pilot is not a type, and never will be. He may talk aviation shop, and appear on the surface to be a dare-devil youth who thrives on excitement. This is absolutely a false idea. The men who do these deeds are just the pick and cream of our manhood. They are heroes, modern ones, who can compare with those of Greek, Norse, and Roman fame, and their deeds are making history.

Their lives are so various before they have taken up their calling that one cannot account for their choice. It mostly comes suddenly, and with such force that every obstacle is overcome to reach the desired end.

Nungesser, a French pilot who has more victories to his name, and decorations given him, than almost any other aviator, is an instance of how these men live for their work, and what stuff they are made of. He is a giant of a man in stature, with fair hair and square shoulders. He has a calm manner and a strong will. He is 22 years old.

In July 1914, he was in the 2nd Hussars, in turn a good horseman, a chauffeur and an aviator. His first mention after the outbreak of war was for the deed that won him the Médaille Militaire. It was on September 3rd that his battalion was in retreat from Charleroi.

His officer was wounded. Nungesser had him placed in safety, then, calling on some others to follow him, he led an attack on a motor car full of German officers. So rapidly and with such force was it carried out that all the officers were wounded. Nungesser then took the car, with all the papers it contained, and drove it at top speed through the German lines. It had 38 hits before it reached safety.

This car was originally one that had belonged to the French army, and had fallen into the hands of the Germans. It was a Mors car, and it was given to Nungesser to drive. He went by the name of "Hussard de la Mors," a play on the word "death."

One day, as he was driving the car, he heard the remarks of some infantry men. One said to the other: "It's a shame that that great strong fellow should ride in a car while we older men should slog along on foot all day."

Nungesser left the car there on the road, and said either he would go into the infantry or he would fly. Being already a pilot, he was appointed to Escadrille No. ——, and it was not long before he took part in bombing expeditions. He was always having duels out of which he came victorious. Sometimes his fighting instinct overcame his discretion, and he fought on a big heavy machine. Still he brought down his victim. Luckily after this unequal fight, his own machine was broken by another pilot, and Nungesser obtained permission to have a small fast machine, better adapted to fighting, and he was put on to this work only.

He had a plan of attack of his own, and his success was such that he was given the Légion d'Honneur for the extraordinary number he brought down.

He seemed to bear a charmed life, for in all these duels and battles against superior numbers he escaped unhurt.

One day when he was simply trying a new machine some vital part broke in the air, and he fell 600 feet to earth. He broke his jaw-bone; he had a serious wound in his head, and sustained some bad internal injury. For five days he remained unconscious. One month after this accident he was still on crutches, he had a metal plate to mend his jaw-bone and a false palate, and was therefore discharged from further military service.

At the news Nungesser was indignant, and angrily insisted that he should have his work

again. He was offered three months' leave. He refused even this, and, to prove his ability to fly as before, he had himself hoisted into a machine, and gained the day. In less than a week he added two more victims to his account, besides an observation balloon which he brought down in flames. These are duly recorded in the official reports with full details.

When out of his aeroplane he can hardly walk, yet after seeing him fly and watching an air duel, one can hardly believe any man capable of such daring and such skill.

It is almost absurd to enumerate his victims since his accident, they sound almost dull in the bare numbers, but each feat might be the glory and fame of any one pilot. Only the other day, with six Germans against him, he came out with a double victory. He dived into the middle of them, left them firing at each other, then came behind two of them, and brought both crashing to earth. His machine was so damaged after this encounter that he could hardly keep it at 2,000 feet on his return. His record is 29 at the time of writing this.

Nungesser is one of many; above the average certainly; but of such stuff are our Flying Men.

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